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Quebec and Confederation

SPEECH OF

Sir Lomer Gouin, K.C.M.G.

Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec

On the Francœur Motion

Delivered in the Legislative Assembly of Quebec
January 23rd, 1918

MONTREAL
LIBRAIRIE BEAUCHEMIN LIMITED
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FOREWORD.

(By the Author of "The Life and Times of Sir George Etienne Cartier.")

The memorable speech delivered by Sir Lomer Gouin, Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec on Quebec and Confederation in the Legislative Assembly of Quebec on January 23rd, 1918, was the speech, not of a politician, but of a statesman. The question was a momentous one, nothing less in fact than the future relations of the great and historic Province of Quebec — the Province which Lord Shaughnessy has justly and strikingly termed the bulwark of Confederation — to the rest of the Dominion. The Quebec Premier's speech on this vital topic, it has been well remarked, not only gave added proof of his statesmanlike qualities but revealed him in stronger light than ever as a national as well as a provincial asset of the greatest value.

The Francœur motion which called forth this historic speech was at the time of its introduction, regarded by many in other parts of the Dominion as both injudicious and inopportune, a view, no doubt, largely due to a misconception of the real purport of the motion, which did not, as many supposed, favor the separation of Quebec from the rest of the Dominion but simply declared that the Province was ready to agree to the breaking of the federal pact of 1867 "*if the other Provinces consider that Quebec is an obstacle to the unity, progress and development of Canada*". The motion, as a matter of fact, was

submitted by Mr Francœur not in any spirit of disloyalty or disunion but simply with a view to clarifying the situation and removing all stumbling blocks to a better understanding between the other Provinces and Quebec.

The calm, dignified and impressive discussion to which the motion gave rise was worthy of the best traditions of the historic Legislature of Quebec and the climax of that discussion was reached in Sir Lomer Gouin's striking address, which is generally acknowledged to have been one of the greatest speeches ever made before a Canadian legislative body. The Quebec Premier in treating the subject rose to the height of the great occasion. In a calm, dispassioned, judicial manner and at times with a force and eloquence which evoked prolonged applause, not only from both sides of the House but from the crowded galleries he put the whole question in its proper historical perspective, effectively defended the Province from the unjust attacks of which it had been made the target, justified the work of the Fathers of Confederation, expressed the belief that the language and other questions which are the cause of divergence between the two great races would in the course of time have a satisfactory solution and closed with an eloquent appeal for peace and union between all Canadians in the interest of the Dominion.

What followed was timely and appropriate — the motion with the unanimous consent of the House was withdrawn by its proposer and one of the most memorable episodes in the annals of the Quebec Legislature brought to a fitting end. But the echoes of the Prime Minister's speech have since been heard from one end of the Dominion to the other and amidst the chorus of praise it is everywhere admitted that Sir Lomer Gouin, by his utterances at a most critical juncture, rendered an invaluable service to the cause of racial concord and national unity.

John A. Macdonald, George Etienne Cartier and the other great Fathers of Confederation in their speeches on the proposed union of the Canadian Provinces foreshadowed with almost prophetic insight the great future before the Dominion. Delivered fifty years after the establishment of the Dominion when the results of the mighty labors of the founders can be adequately appreciated Sir Lomer Gouin's address is entitled to be ranked with the great speeches of the Fathers as a masterly defence and justification of Confederation. As such it must naturally appeal to all Canadians.

Since its delivery the demand from all parts of the Dominion for a complete English version of the speech has been so insistent that it has been deemed advisable by a number of those who are interested in the promotion of a better understanding between the other Provinces and Quebec to issue the English text in convenient form in order that it may be available for English speaking Canadians. It is generally recognized that attacks upon the French Canadians, emanate from a comparatively small section and that the great majority of English speaking Canadians, as Sir Lomer Gouin emphasized in his speech, are fair people. From such the Quebec Premier's utterances will undoubtedly receive the attention they deserve and even those who are more or less hostile to Quebec may be lead to entertain a different view after reading the speech.

The text herewith given is the one which has been personally approved by Sir Lomer Gouin.

JOHN BOYD.

The Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec reassembled on the afternoon of January 23rd, 1918, when the debate was resumed on the motion submitted by Mr J. N. Francœur, member for Lotbinière. The Honorable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Antonin Galipeault occupied the Speaker's chair, there was a full attendance of members and the galleries of the House were crowded with spectators showing the great interest taken in the question.

The Prime Minister of the Province, Sir Lomer Gouin, K.C.M.G., was received with loud applause when he rose to address the House on the motion.

QUEBEC AND CONFEDERATION

(Speech delivered by Sir Lomer Gouin, K.C.M.G., Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec, on the Francœur motion, in the Legislative Assembly of Quebec, January 23rd, 1918.)

Mr Speaker,

I have followed with the closest attention the extremely interesting debate on the motion that has been submitted for our consideration. It was with the greatest pleasure, indeed, that I listened to those of my colleagues, who have spoken on the question and whose eloquence has charmed us. In extending to them not only my own congratulations but the congratulations of all the honorable members I am exp essing, I am sure, the unanimous feeling of this House.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, this debate has created some concern in the other Provinces of the Dominion. The fears that have been entertained should now be dissipated, in fact, it can be truly affirmed that never has a debate been conducted with greater calmness and with more dignity.

It is now my desire to make a few remarks and in doing so I would ask the indulgence of the

House. Not that I am in any way embarassed as to what I have to say as that has been quite clear to my mind for a long time. Besides, the leader of the Opposition has been kind enough to assist me, not only by traceing the main lines of my speech, but even condescending to prepare the conclusion. (*laughter*). The reason I ask the indulgence of the House is that I am well aware that I cannot rise to the heights of eloquence attained by the honorable members who have preceded me. But the generous attention so often accorded me by my colleagues is sufficient encouragement and once more I shall rely upon their kind attention.

The Francœur motion which is the subject of the present debate reads as follows :

"That this House is of opinion that the Province of Quebec would be disposed to agree to breaking the Federation pact of 1867 if the other Provinces consider that Quebec is an obstacle to the unity, progress and development of Canada."

The honorable member for Lotbinière (Mr Francœur) has outlined the motives which prompted him to propose this motion. He desired to reply to the insulting words and the unjust articles that appeared in certain newspapers. It is pretended, I know, that that was not his sole object. It is said that his action was inspired by spite owing to the result of the recent Federal election. It is also claimed that he desired by means of this motion to attack the Federal Government. It is even added

that there is something in his action that borders upon disloyalty. That is what astonishes me the most. (*Hear-Hear*).

Why, I ask myself, should such affirmations be credited ? Certainly those who have read history and who have followed the course of events since 1867 will realize the injustice of such a criticism.

For instance, if I may be permitted to open a chapter of the history of one of our sister Provinces, I find that the Legislature of Nova Scotia on April 8th, 1886, adopted by a vote of fifteen to seven a resolution the object of which was the separation of that Province from the Dominion of Canada. That resolution which was presented by the then Prime Minister of the Province, Hon. W. S. Fielding, one of the most respected as well as one of the most distinguished public men of Canada, read as follows :

" The Honorable the Provincial Secretary, pursuant to notice given on a previous day, moved that the House do come to the following resolutions, viz :

" That, previous to the Union of the Provinces, the Province of Nova Scotia was in a most healthy financial condition;

" That by the terms of the Union the chief sources of revenue were transferred to the Federal Government;

" That strong objections were taken at the time of the Union to the financial terms thereof, relating

to the Province of Nova Scotia, as being wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the various services left under the management of the Provincial Legislature;

"That an appeal was made to the Imperial Government for a repeal of the Union as far as it related to this Province;

"That while they refused to assent to such repeal until a further trial of the Union was had, the Imperial Government, in the Colonial Secretary's despatch of the 10th June, 1868, to Lord Monck, requested that the Government and Parliament of Canada would modify any arrangement respecting taxation, or respecting the regulation of trade and fisheries, which might prejudice the interests of Nova Scotia;

"That on the 6th day of October, 1868, the Right Honorable Sir John A. Macdonald, in a letter to the Honorable Joseph Howe, referring to the above despatch, stated as follow :

"The Canadian Government are not only ready but anxious to enter upon a frank and full discussion of these points, and are prepared, in case the pressure of taxation should be shown to be unequal or unjust to Nova Scotia, to relieve that pressure by every means in their power. They are also ready to discuss any financial or commercial questions tnat may be raised by the Nova Scotia Government or yourself or representatives of Nova Scotia in the Parliament of the Dominion"; and he further said: "You may remember that I suggested to the Committee that Mr. Annand, the Finance Minister of the Province, or any other gentleman selected for the purpose, should visit Ottawa and sit down with the Finance Minister here, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any inequality or injustice exists, the extent of such inequality, and the best remedy, and I now reiterate the assurance I then gave, that the Government here will consider the question, not in a rigid, but in the most liberal spirit, with a

desire to do even more than justice for the sake of securing the co-operation of the people of Nova Scotia in working out the new constitution. We will enter upon the inquiry whenever it will suit your convenience, and the Canadian Government engage to press upon Parliament, with all the influence they possess, the legislation required to carry out any financial readjustment that may be agreed to."

"That the Dominion Government and Parliament have never carried out the request or desire of the Imperial Government and the promise of the Right Honorable Sir John A. Macdonald, as above quoted;

"That after nineteen years under the Union, successive Governments have found that the objections which were urged against the terms of Union at first apply with still greater force now than in the first year of the Union, and the feeling of discontent with regard to the financial arrangement is now believed by this House to be more general and more deeply fixed than ever before;

"That Nova Scotia, previous to the Union, had the lowest tariff, and was, notwithstanding, in the best financial condition of any of the provinces entering the Union;

"That the commercial as well as the financial condition of Nova Scotia is in an unsatisfactory and depressed condition;

"That it seems evident that the terms of the "British North America Act", combined with the high tariff and fiscal laws of the Dominion, are largely the cause of this unsatisfactory state of the finances and trade of Nova Scotia;

"That there is at present no prospect that, while the Province remains upon the existing terms of Union a member of the Canadian Federation, any satisfactory improvement in the foregoing respects, is at all probable;

"That previous to 1867, negotiations were in progress for a Union of the Maritime Provinces, but were interrupted by the negotiations for the larger Union;

"That it now appears as it did then, that the interests of the people of the several Maritime Provinces now incorporated with Canada are in most respects identical;

"That the members of this branch of the Legislature of Nova Scotia are of opinion, and do hereby declare their belief, that the financial and commercial interests of the people of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island would be advanced by these Provinces withdrawing from the Canadian Federation and uniting under one Government;

"That if it be found impossible, after negotiations for that purpose, to secure the co-operation of the respective Governments of the sister provinces in withdrawing from the Confederation and entering instead into a Maritime Union, then this Legislature deems it absolutely necessary that Nova Scotia, in order that its railways, and other public works and services may be extended and maintained as the requirements of the people need them; its industries properly fostered, its commerce invi-

gorated and expanded, and its financial interests placed upon a sound basis, such as was the case previous to Confederation, should ask permission from the Imperial Parliament to withdraw from the Union with Canada, and return to the status of a Province of Great Britain, with full control over all fiscal laws and tariff regulations within the Province, such as prevailed previous to Confederation;

"That this House thus declares its opinion and belief, in order that candidates for the suffrages of the people at the approaching elections may be enabled to place this vital and important question of separation from Canada, before them for decision at the polls."

"Which being seconded and a debate arising thereon, the question being propounded from the chair that such resolution be agreed to, and the House dividing thereon, there appeared for the motion, fifteen; against the motion, seven." *

At the ensueing election, Mr Speaker, the people of Nova Scotia almost unanimously pronounced in favor of the rupture of the federal pact. Was there any recrimination at that time in the Province of Quebec or in any of the other Provinces against Nova Scotia? Were Mr Fielding and the people of that Province accused of disloyalty?

The same rule applies as regards conscription. It has been made a crime for Quebec to have even

* Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia, Session 1886.

discussed that question; above all it has been regarded as a crime for Quebec to have voted as it did at the last election. Why has the same reproach not been levelled against New Brunswick, against Nova Scotia, the Province of the Prime-Minister of Canada, which gave a majority against conscription or against Prince Edward Island which unanimously pronounced against that measure? That is not impartiality; that is an injustice. It is not that British fair play which we have a right to claim in the Province of Quebec as in all the other Provinces of Confederation.

And since I am speaking of fair play, I may say, Mr Speaker, that the leader of the Opposition (Mr Sauvé) hardly displayed fair play towards me the other day. He forged a thunderbolt with which he was going to annihilate me and his organ "L'Evénement", in the sensational manner of which you are aware forefold its rumblings. My honorable friend spoke well; he was eloquent, at times he was courageous. But it was clear that whilst he was repudiating his former alliances he was seeking to secure a pardon from his old friends and in order to do so he could find nothing better than to take me to task.

After having for weeks prepared in darkness and in mystery his speech and the amendment which he intended as its conclusion, he summoned me before notary (the member for Lake St. John) and persuasively urged me to propose this amendment which he did not dare to propose himself... I re-

fused. I refused, Mr Speaker, because that amendment was not acceptable, because it was out of order, because the honorable leader of the Opposition himself would not have voted for it and finally because I am not a man to place false hopes in the hearts of my fellow countrymen, hopes which could only result in deception. The object of the amendment was to ask for the disallowance of the Conscription Act but it would have resulted in nothing. (*Hear-Hear*).

Mr Sauvé. — If the Prime Minister will make the amendment his own I declare that I will support it. Or if he will promise me the support of the Government majority I am ready to move it myself.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — The leader of the Opposition may present whatever amendments he wishes; provided they conform to the rules of the House and are in the interests of the Province and of the country I can assure him of my support.

But it is in vain for the leader of the Opposition to now try to alter his attitude; he knows very well that the people of the Province did not regard it seriously. The people of Quebec as well as the honorable members of this House very well understood that the course followed by my honorable friend was nothing but an electoral manœuvre. (*Hear-Hear*).

We have not the right, Mr Speaker, to play with the sincerity of the good people of this Province. Disallowance! But could the Province pronounce

itself more solidly and more solemnly on this question than it did in the recent election ? On the other hand is it to be thought that the amendment prepared by the leader of the Opposition and over which he broods so fondly would suffice to lead the Imperial Government to disallow the conscription law ? The honorable member for Two Mountains (Mr Sauvé) was better advised when he maintained that we should leave to Sir Wilfrid Laurier the task of clearing the ground and finding a solution to this problem. (*Hear-Hear*).

The leader of the Opposition has reproached me with not having gone to Ottawa when Conscription was being discussed. If I had gone he would no doubt have reproached me for meddling with affairs that did not concern me,he would even have held me responsible for the defections which took place in the Liberal ranks. Moreover if it was my duty to go to Ottawa was it not equally the duty of the leader of the Opposition ? Why did he not go and at least try to convince his friends who are responsible for the measure for which he repudiates them to-day ? (*Applause*).

Mr Sauvé. — I declared myself against conscription. The Prime Minister made no declaration during the whole discussion.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — I pronounced myself from the very first. It is true I added that I had absolute confidence in Sir Wilfrid Laurier, I declared that we must be guided by him just as my hono-

rable friend desires to-day. He therefore contradicted himself in reproaching me the other day for the speeches which I made during the last campaign.

Mr Sauvé. — I found fault with their violence.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — I did nothing more then to give expression to the basic principles of our parliamentary law, to the principles of English constitutional law. I did nothing more than to define British liberties and if the leader of the Opposition would heed the dictates of his heart and his reason he would congratulate me as I congratulated him for having spoken as he did and for having separated his cause from those who now direct us at Ottawa. (*Hear-Hear*).

Really my honorable friend would have done better to have suppressed this sensation which caused him so much labor. Besides, all the trouble he gave himself has profited him very little. The "Chronicle" the day after his speech said to him in very clear language "*crois ou meurs.*" And "L'Evénement", which on Friday covered him with the incense of its choicest aromas on Saturday, by order, excommunicated him, neither more nor less. Once more he has therefore shown us that the lightning does not fall every time it thunders. The sensation prepared by my honorable friend has in fact produced the same result as the mountain which after much travail brought forth a mouse. (*Laughter and Applause*).

Mr Sauvé. — It served to proclaim a Cromwell.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — When I spoke of Cromwell, Mr Speaker, I simply quoted the great Conservative organ, the "Montreal Gazette."

Mr Sauvé. — Two friends.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — Yes and I am not ashamed of it. I pity Mr Sauvé, his speeches will keep them apart for a long time.

Mr Sauvé continued to interrupt.

Sir Lomer Gouin. — I would ask the leader of the Opposition to accord me the same attention that I gave him. Not that I fear his interruptions for he will perceive as my speech develops that I feel perfectly capable of replying to him. And now let us come to the motion.

I desire to define my position on this question very clearly. Mr Speaker, I believe in the Canadian Confederation. The Federal system of government seems to me to be the only possible one for Canada in view of differences in race and creed and also in view of the variety and multiplicity of the local needs of our immense territory. (*Hear-Hear*).

To be even more precise I would say that if I had been a party to the negotiations of 1864 I would certainly have tried, had I had the authority, to obtain for the French Canadian minority in the sister provinces the same protection that was secured for the English minority of the Province of

Quebec. I would not have asked this as a concession but as a measure of justice. (*Applause*). And even if it had not been granted I would have voted in favor of the resolutions of 1864.

When the project was debated in 1865 I would have renewed my demand for that measure of prudence and of justice and if I had not succeeded I would still have declared myself in favor of the system which was adopted on the 13th of March, 1865. And even at the present hour, Mr Speaker, despite the conflicts that have taken place in the administration of our country since 1867, despite the distress caused to those from Quebec who constitute a minority in the other Provinces if I had to choose between Confederation and the Act of 1791 or the Act of 1840-41, I would be for Confederation. (*Hear-Hear*).

It is well that the young, that those of riper age, that even the aged who have not had the leisure to study history should realize that Confederation was not the result of caprice or an act of frivolity but the result of a necessity. That act was freely accepted by Quebec. Without Cartier, without the popular will of Lower Canada we would not have had Confederation. (*Applause*).

For many years previous to 1865 Canada was tending to an *impasse*, government, in fact, was in a chaos. All our politicians, all those who concerned themselves with public affairs recognized and admitted that a change was imperative in our system of government, that the Union Act of 1841 had

ceased to work. It must however, be remembered that the Union Act despite the injustice of its origin did not prevent the aggrandizement and progress of the country in agriculture, in colonization, in commerce and in industry. It was under the Union that our municipal institutions were established, that our school system was developed and that responsible government was granted.

It was from 1840 to 1867 that the struggles of our political parties were, perhaps, the most bitter and the most violent. But despite those struggles the offspring of the two great races in Canada colonized and developed the country. Our fathers knew how to pursue their work without concerning themselves with the political storms which passed over Canada.

Some of the speakers, who have preceded me, recalled the struggles of that period. The main cause of division between the politicians and between the Provinces was the question of representation. Previous to the Union the population of Lower Canada exceeded the population of Upper Canada by three hundred thousand. In 1844 Lower Canada had 200,000 souls more than Upper Canada. Papineau in 1849 sought to amend the Act of 1841 which he regarded as unjust to Lower Canada, the representation of which was the same as that of Upper Canada. He did not succeed. Later on it was Upper Canada which complained, George Brown and his friends made a similar demand without success. Division became more and more pronounced. From

that day was heard at intervals and especially at election times the cry: "No Quebec domination, No French domination." It was finally realized that, for the salvation of the country, it was imperative that these struggles should be brought to an end and in 1858 the Cartier-Macdonald Cabinet of which George Etienne Cartier was the head formulated the principle of Confederation. In the speech from the Throne delivered by Sir Edmund Head at the close of the session of 1858 it was stated:

> "I propose in the course of the recess to communicate with Her Majesty's Government and with the governments of the sister colonies on another matter of very great importance. I am desirous of inviting them to discuss with us the principles on which a bond of a federal character uniting the provinces of British North America may perhaps hereafter be practicable."

Cartier and Macdonald and their friends already believed that the sole remedy for the existing weakness was a Confederation of the Provinces. With the exception of sending a delegation to England nothing, however, was done at that time. In 1860 in accordance with resolutions adopted at a great convention held in Toronto, George Brown proposed the federation of Upper and Lower Canada. Antoine-Aimé Dorion and Drummond and McGee were the only members from Lower Canada to vote with Brown, whose proposal was rejected. Parties returned to their quarrels, to their divisions, they even forgot the proposals of 1858. In 1865 Brown proposed to the Taché-Macdonald Ministry the solution of the problem... Confederation. In the

same year delegates from the British North American colonies assembled at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and subsequently met at Quebec where they adopted the resolutions that constitute the basis of the Constitution of 1867.

At the Parliamentary session of 1865 the Prime Minister of United Canada, Sir Etienne Pascal Taché, in proposing the adoption of those resolutions said :

"The time has come when, in my opinion, all those who love their country should unite to find a remedy for the evils that confront us. It may, perhaps, be said that the remedy proposed is not required by circumstances but I would like to know what other plan could be proposed.

"For the past two years legislation in Canada has come almost to a standstill and if we look at the statute book since 1862 we will find that the only public measures there inscribed were enacted simply by the permission of the Opposition. Such was the condition of things for two years, such was the evil. But it was not the only one, there was another, not less deplorable. I refer to the administration of public affairs during the same period. From May 21st, 1862 to the end of June 1864 there were no less than five different governments administering the affairs of the country.'

And Sir E. P. Taché added :

"When these measures were agitated (the federation of the two provinces or the Confederation of the British North American colonies) the country was, in reality, on the verge of civil war."

Following the Prime Minister George Etienne Cartier said :

"The question reduces itself to this — we must either have a confederation of British North America or be absorbed by the American Union."

John A. Macdonald foresaw three alternatives — representation according to population, annexation or Confederation.

Antoine Aimé Dorion favored a federation of Upper and Lower Canada; he opposed a confederation of all the colonies through fear of a legislative union. He was however ready to accept the Government's proposal if the people should approve of it. Letellier de St-Just was absolutely opposed to Confederation without the people being consulted. He preferred the Union with representation according to population.

The two main objections that were raised in Lower Canada to Confederation were, a fear on the part of some of a legislative union and a fear on the part of others that the English minority would be oppressed by the French majority. It was in reference to the last objection that Sir E. P. Taché said before the whole Province of Ontario:

"If we obtain a federal union it will be equivalent to a separation of the provinces and thus Lower Canada will preserve its autonomy with all the institutions which are dear to it and over which it will be able to exercise the surveillance requisite to safeguard them from all danger. But there is a portion of the inhabitants of Lower Canada who, at first sight, may seem to have stronger reasons than the French Canadians to complain. I refer to the English Protestants. And why? Because they are in a minority. I believe, however, that if they will carefully examine the project in all its details they will be fully reassured as to its consequences. In the first place there is a very important fact to be considered; the laws of Canada have been consolidated and the English speaking inhabitants have become so familiar with them as to be perfectly satisfied with them. They may, perhaps, contend that the majority of the local legislature may later on commit an injustice in their regard. But I think that a glance at the past will remove any such fear. Before the union of the two provinces when a large majority of the members of the Legislature were French the English speaking inhabitants never had any reason to complain of them. There is in fact no instance where an injustice was even attempted." (*Applause*).

This striking and noble declaration was seconded a few days later by Thomas D'Arcy McGee who said :

"Neither do I think that my Protestant fellow-countrymen need have any fear whatever as the French Canadians have never been intolerant."

And John A. Macdonald added :

The Government will present a measure to amend the School Law of Lower Canada so as to protect the rights of the minority and at the same time satisfy the majority which has always shown the greatest respect for the rights of the minority and which, I have no doubt will continue to respect them." (*Applause*).

The declaration made by Sir E. P. Taché, Mr Speaker, might have been repeated without fear of contradiction by all my predecessors, by all the Prime Ministers of Quebec since 1867 and it is with pride that I repeat it to-day, certain of being supported in it by all the representatives of the minority in this House, Conservatives and Liberals, just as the Prime Minister of 1865 was supported by McGee, by Macdonald and by all the representatives of the two Canadas. (*Prolonged Applause*).

The project of 1864, Mr Speaker, was exhaustively, eloquently and ably debated during the session of 1865; the Liberal party and the Conservative party may well be proud of the leaders they had then, of those whom we regard as our political forebears. After a discussion of three months a majority declared in favor of Confederation; on the 13th March the resolutions were adopted and on July 1st in virtue of the British North America Act,

Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were constituted into a Confederation.

In 1870, as you know, Mr Speaker, the Province of Manitoba was united to the Dominion and in the same year the Canadian Government acquired the Northwest territories. In 1871 British Columbia entered Confederation and finally in 1873 Prince Edward Island cast in her lot with the other Provinces of the Dominion.

For fifty years now, Mr Speaker, we have lived under this system. We have had difficulties, it is true, we have had conflicts, more or less violent but have we any right to say that the system has failed ? I BELIEVE JUST THE CONTRARY.

When I regard the results achieved, when I mark the development that has taken place, when I take into account our progress I am ready to say with Sir Wilfrid Laurier that " the hopes of the Fathers of Confederation have been surpassed." (*Applause*)

Permit me, Mr Speaker, to quote some statistics in order to show the House, something of what has been accomplished by Canada since 1867 :

AREA OF THE DOMINION

In 1867	540,000 square miles
In 1917	3,729,665 "

POPULATION OF THE DOMINION

In 1867	3,600,000 souls
In 1917	7,600,000 "

POPULATION OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

In 1861	1,110,664 souls
In 1916	2,305,754 "

VALUE OF CROPS

The value of Canadian crops has risen within the last fifteen years from $195,000,000 in 1901 to $841,000,000 in 1917.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

In 1868-70 Canada exported $13,000,000 of agricultural products; in 1916-17 it exported $480,000,000.

MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS

In 1868 our manufactured products were practically nil, in 1917 they amounted in value to $1,300,000,000.

FISHERIES

In 1870 the yield of Canadian fisheries amounted in value to $6,577,391; in 1915 their value was $31,264,631.

MINES

During the last forty years the mineral production of Canada has risen in value from $10,000,000 to $137,000,000.

FORESTS

In 1871 the value of our forest products was $34,000,000; to-day it is $175,000,000.

RAILWAYS

Mileage..	2,278	35,582
Capital..	$257,037,188	$1,875,810,888
Freight tonnage..	5,670,836	101,393,989
Passengers..	5,190,416	46,322,035

EDUCATION

Since 1867 the number of schools in Canada has increased from 10,000 to 26,000, the number of teachers from 11,000 to 39,000, the number of pupils from 664,000 to 1,327,000 and the cost of education from $2,500,000 to nearly $56,000,000.

Dorion, one of the finest and noblest figures of his time dreaded the federal system because he feared that the Province of Quebec would be swamped in a great Canadian whole. The opponents of Confederation declared, as Dorion did, that Confederation was nothing more nor less than a step to

legislative union. Can it be maintained to-day that those fears, that those misgivings were well founded? For fifty years now our Province has formed part of Confederation and legislative union has not been brought about. We have legislated and we continue to freely legislate in the municipal and educational spheres and never have we been interfered with in the administration of our civil laws. The following figures, Mr Speaker, will show the number of provincial statutes that have been disallowed by Ottawa during the first forty years of Confederation:

Quebec	4
Ontario	9
Nova Scotia	5
New Brunswick	1

No, Mr Speaker, no government at Ottawa has yet attempted to force us into a legislative union.

My honorable friend from Rimouski (Mr A. Tessier), in the fine and extremely eloquent speech which he delivered yesterday enumerated the attempted encroachments of the Federal Government on the provincial sphere. He referred first to the fisheries question. That was a question for the courts; we argued it and we won. Now there has just arisen the question of the restrictions placed upon the issue of provincial and municipal debentures; that will be another case for the courts which will be won much more easily than those we have had to contest in the past. (*Applause*).

No, Mr Speaker, it is not such differences of opinion that will lead to legislative union. Such divergences arise in all federated countries, look at the United States where they are of almost daily occurrence.

Our Province, as we have seen, thanks to Confederation, thanks to our union with the sister provinces, has progressed to a marvellous degree and certainly nobody can deny that it is due to Confederation that Montreal has in point of importance become the fourth city of North America. And if we regard the French groups settled in the other provinces can it be said that Confederation has been unfavorable to them ? Would their position, would their lot be improved if Quebec broke the federal pact ? Let me, Mr Speaker, quote an interesting table showing how the French Canadian population has progressed since 1867 :

CENSUS OF 1861

	French Canadians	Total Population
Lower Canada	867,320	1,110,664
Upper Canada	33,287	1,396,091

CENSUS OF 1911

	French Canadians	Total Population
Alberta	19,825	374,663
British Columbia	8,907	392,480
Manitoba	30,944	455,614
New Brunswick	98,611	351,889
Nova Scotia	51,746	492,338
Ontario	202,442	2,523,274
Prince Edward Island	13,117	93,728
Quebec	1,605,339	2,002,712
Saskatchewan	23,251	492,432
Yukon	482	8,512
Territories	226	17,196
Total	2,054,890	7,204,838

That is to say, Mr Speaker, that there are in Canada to-day, outside the Province of Quebec, at least 500,000 French Canadians or more than half of the total number in the two Canadas in 1867. Would it be to the interest of our own people of whom I have spoken for the Province of Quebec to retire from the Confederation ?

Reference has been made to the school troubles which arose in New Brunswick. But were those troubles caused by our forming part of Confederation? Would they not have arisen even without Confederation? There have been difficulties of the same nature in Manitoba. There the federal pact was violated to the detriment of the minority and the authors of the wrong will have to bear the responsibility in history. These difficulties were settled as well as they could be but would the French Canadians either in Manitoba or in New Brunswick have been better treated apart from Confederation ?

The Province of Ontario has also had its troubles which have lasted for some time, for too long in fact. There it is a question of the language in the schools. The majority claims that the heads of French Canadian families do not do all they should to have their children taught English while the minority maintains that it is unjustly and cruelly deprived of the right to teach its children French in the schools.

Questions of language, Mr Speaker, have existed since the world was a world. They existed even

previous to the Tower of Babel. Almost everywhere they have resulted in division and in regrettable conflicts which always ended with a settlement and this, I am convinced, will also be the case in Ontario. Besides the terrible war in progress will change many things amongst all the peoples engaged in it. The development of all the resources of our intelligence and the utilization of all our talents will be requisite to repair the disasters. Very rare indeed, Mr Speaker, are the nations that can confine themselves to one language and still rarer the countries that can impose a single language upon their people. (*Applause*). I, yesterday, heard with pleasure the honorable member for St. Georges, Montreal (Mr Gault) express the hope that the Ontario school trouble would soon be settled. He spoke with wisdom, he spoke like one of the early Kings of Hungary, St. Stephen, who nine hundred years ago said "*Regnum unius linguae, regnum imbecilis.*" (*Loud Applause*).

Needless to say, Mr Speaker, that I have no idea of applying those words to any Province. I cite them simply as the opinion of an authority who experienced the troubles which we ourselves are having.

What would result, Mr Speaker, if we were to separate from Confederation? I do not wish it to be thought for a moment that the honorable member for Lotbinière (Mr Franceur) wished to raise that question. But as we are upon that ground it is better that each should express his

thoughts. What position would we be in, shut off as we would be without any access to the sea during the winter months? How could we defend our immense frontier? What part of the national debt would we have to assume? What would be the customs tariffs of the Provinces with which we now trade freely? And finally what would be the position of French Canadians outside of Quebec?

It is true, Mr Speaker, that our Province has often been made the object of unjust attacks and we have not even been spared insulting expressions. But is even all that sufficient to justify us in asking for the rupture of a pact which has given us such results as those which I have outlined?

If we look at the history of the neighboring Republic we will find a great lesson of unity and a most encouraging example. The American Confederation had been in existance for eighty years; each of the States composing it vied with the other in effort, in ardor and in ambition to make their common country great until the question of the freedom of the negroes arose, a question which threatened to ruin that great Republic. The quarrel, begun in the newspapers and on the hustings and continued with great bitterness in Congress, ultimately brought the antagonists to the battlefield. There followed the civil war, that war of secession which cost our neighbors the lives of 500,000 men, a million wounded and two billions of dollars.

And what resulted from so much ruin, from so much misery, from so much bloodshed ? Reconciliation, a fruitful union which enabled the American Republic to develop, to become wealthy, to expand in the phenomenal manner, of which you are all aware and which has given it the power in concert with the Allies to preserve to humanity right, justice and liberty.

We, the French Canadians, complain of insults and of appeals to prejudice. But our fathers suffered the same troubles under all previous *regimes*, under the regime of 1760, under that of 1764, that of 1774, that of 1791, even more under that of 1840 and especially during the last sixty years, always, I repeat always, through the fault of politicians in order to satisfy their lust of power and their greed of patronage. We have been insulted, it is true. But I persist in believing that this has not been the action of the majority but on the contrary of only a small minority. I believe, Mr Speaker, in fact I know that the majority of the people of Canada are good and fair people. (*Applause*).

Lord Acton, the great English historian, has said that the liberty of a country is measured by the liberty of its minority. That is to say that if a minority is not well treated it is not it alone which suffers as all those of the majority who have a right spirit, a just and generous heart, suffer with the minority and to the same extent as it does.

We must not, Mr Speaker, forget the good qualities of others, we must remember that it is due to

the combined qualities of all groups and of all races in the Dominion that our country has become great. (*Applause*).

His Excellency the Governor General of Canada, the Duke of Devonshire, on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Confderation last year truly said :

> "Confederation will stand for all time as the monument of the work accomplished by the devotion, the unselfishness and the far-sighted vision of those men whom we are all proud to call the Fathers of Confederation. To those men and their work we owe a debt which we can never repay, and it is for us, in our generation, to see that the glorious heritage to which we have succeeded shall be handed to those who come after us, unimpaired, and, as far as lies in our power, with added glory and lustre."

Let us preserve, yes, Mr Speaker, let us preserve intact our field of action and guard against even dreaming of diminishing the great task it is our mission to continue. Let us in the accomplishment of that task be inspired by the courage, by the faith, by the ideals of our ancestors, the discoverers of this country and by the splendid visions of the Fathers of Confederation and thanks to our work, to our efforts and to our sacrifices the 20th century will count our country amongst the great nations of the earth. (*Loud Applause*).

When I regard our immense territory, when I admire our old Provinces with all their rich historical souvenirs, and the new born of yesterday, from the prairies and the virgin forests with their teeming power I am proud of the name of Canadian, proud of my country — Canada. I am thankful

that Providence allowed me to be born in this new and fruitful land which is sheltered from the bloody carnage that is now devastating Europe, a land of liberty, a land of equality, which knows no castes and which recognizes no superiority save that of talent, of effort and of rectitude, a land where fruitful peace will bring union and concord and promote more progress and prosperity than in any other corner of the world. (*Applause*).

It is in order to preserve to our country her greatness, to guard in the hearts of our children their hopes and to transmit to them unimpaired the heritage received from our fathers that we should fight fearlessly under the passing storm, that we should work ceaselessly and without faltering for the development and maintenance of the Canadian Confederation. (*Prolonged Applause*).

Sir Lomer Gouin resumed his seat amidst loud and continued applause not only from both sides of the House but from the crowded galleries.

Following the Prime-Minister's speech, the motion was withdrawn by its proposer, Mr. Francœur, with the unanimous consent of the House.